

but this investment will make a real difference to so many Americans who today still lack access to high-speed internet.

I see the Republican leader has arrived on the floor.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has been a little more than 6 months since the Biden administration and our Democratic-led Congress were sworn in. So let's zoom out from the daily political drama and ask the simplest possible question: How is it going? How is the leadership working out for middle-class families? Or put more directly: What big aspects of our national life could Democrats even claim are headed in the right direction on their watch?

In January, our Democratic friends inherited the most favorable trend lines that any incoming administration could possibly ask for. Three safe and effective vaccines had been discovered, developed, and were already spreading across our country. Our economy was packed with dry powder and ready for a historic comeback. It was already morning in America when this Democratic government showed up. Mostly what they had to do was not get in the way.

So where are we 6 months in? The U.S. economy has broken some recent records, mostly the wrong ones. Inflation just clocked its steepest 12-month increase in more than a decade. The month before, a separate measure of core inflation rose at its fastest rate since 1992—higher gas prices, higher grocery prices, soaring costs for everything from household purchases, to automobiles, to housing itself.

Inflation is painful enough, but it isn't the only problem. Employment growth has not been fast enough. Last quarter, GDP grew much more slowly than anticipated. Six months and trillions of dollars of government spending into the Democrats' efforts at a recovery, and Gallup says America's economic confidence is still only neutral. We are not—we are not—where we need to be.

What about the rule of law? There is still a historic surge in people trying to come across our southern border, but administration officials have spent far more energy denying responsibility for the problem than trying to fix it. Catch and release is still the name of the game.

According to news reports, out of tens of thousands of illegal immigrants who have simply been released into the interior of our country without a court date—now listen to this—just 13 percent—13 percent have shown up at their mandatory meeting with ICE afterward.

So the border is functionally open—especially absurd at a time when many leaders are asking American citizens to

step up various COVID precautions. Not much testing, social distancing, or mask wearing is happening in the Rio Grande Valley.

Meanwhile, a surge in violent crime, including recordbreaking murders in many places, has too many citizens afraid of their own city streets.

Perhaps our Democratic friends think foreign policy is going well. I sure wish it were. The President's rushed pullback from Afghanistan has left our friends and partners in the lurch and rolled out a red carpet for a Taliban takeover that is already underway. Its approach to Iran appears to be promising big concessions to our adversary for no reason even as their terrorist proxies continue to attack U.S., Israeli, and Arab interests all across the region.

While I appreciate the administration's tough talk on Russia and China, those words ring hollow when they fail to impose real consequences on cyber attacks and propose to cut our defense spending after inflation.

So what about COVID-19 itself? Certainly, the pandemic is not the fault of any administration or any political party, but this administration boasted with great confidence they had a playbook that was guaranteed to crush the virus. They have continued to roll out the vaccines the prior administration developed, and for that, they certainly deserve some credit. But, especially recently, Americans have received far too many mixed messages and muddled communications about masks, vaccines, and what risks remain and for whom.

Meanwhile, the Democrats' allies in the teachers unions continue to speculate publicly that perhaps schools may not remain open this fall after all. They are flirting with another lost year for our kids even when there are safe and effective vaccines that can reduce adults' risk of grave illness to almost nil and when we know that, mercifully, this virus has mostly spared children from serious illness the whole time.

So, look, everyone is rooting for America; everyone is rooting for the recovery that middle-class families deserve; but that is not what the Democrats' decisions and policies are delivering. No wonder America's optimism has been in free fall the last few months. One survey found that a majority—55 percent—are pessimistic about where the country is headed in the coming year. That pessimism has increased almost 20 percentage points since just this spring.

The soul of America has not been restored. It is anxious, it is uneasy, and in too many cases, the more the Democrats' policies have taken effect, the more problems American families have faced.

Now, certainly, the 6-month mark still provides plenty of time for my Democratic colleagues to recalibrate. We have already notched some bipartisan wins here in the Senate. Our col-

leagues could put away the partisan approach that has already supercharged inflation, slowed rehiring, and is setting back our national security. But, alas, our Democratic colleagues are signaling they are still addicted to going it alone.

My friends on the other side are signaling that a few days from now, just a few days from now, they will begin the process of ramming through a reckless, multitrillion-dollar taxing-and-spending spree that will stick middle-class families with higher costs, more inflation, fewer jobs, and lower wages.

It is not the strategy that will turn around Democrats' lackluster report card; it will do just the opposite. It almost seems designed to make every problem that families are facing considerably worse. It would meet significant inflation with another massive avalanche of printing and borrowing. It would hammer a tenuous economic recovery with historic tax hikes and job-killing Green New Deal regulations. It would, for some reason, respond to a live border crisis with a big amnesty to lure even more people here illegally.

No working American in Kentucky or anywhere else would look at a plan like this and get on board, and neither will a single Republican. If Washington Democrats really want to take the remarkable head start they inherited at the dawn of this recovery year and squander it through bad policy, they will need to do it all alone.

Ms. COLLINS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### AWARDING FOUR CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDALS TO THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE AND THOSE WHO PROTECTED THE U.S. CAPITOL ON JANUARY 6, 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, Mr. President, as you know, as we all know, January 6 unleashed many horrors, but it also revealed many heroes. A day that many of us remember for its violence, anger, and destruction was not without its share of bravery, sacrifice, and selflessness.

I am, of course, talking about the Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police. In a few moments, my colleagues Senators KLOBUCHAR and BLUNT will ask the Senate to award them the Congressional Gold Medal. It is the highest expression of gratitude that Congress can bestow. I cannot imagine more worthy recipients than the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend this temple of democracy.

I want to thank Senator KLOBUCHAR, the chair of the Rules Committee, and

Senator BLUNT, the ranking member of the Rules Committee, for working so hard on this. And I want to commend the House and Speaker PELOSI and the House Members who voted for it as well.

Now I must mention that I am still stunned by what happened in the House, where 21 Members of the House Republican caucus voted against this legislation. The Senate is different. I expect this to pass unanimously. That is why we are here doing it today. But those folks in the House were some of the same folks who likened the January 6 attack to “a normal tourist visit,” who deny the events that day were an insurrection. The same folks who screamed the loudest about the dangers of defunding the police refused to defend the police—the very police that shielded them—from the vicious mob on January 6.

For the life of me, I don’t know how they sleep at night.

That is one of the many reasons this gold medal is so important. The gold medal is about setting the record straight and recognizing the true heroism on display that fateful day.

My colleagues, we have a moral obligation to never forget what our first responders faced down. A mob of White supremacists and domestic terrorists stormed the barriers with vicious force, using flag poles as spears and fences as battering rams. Capitol Police officers were swarmed, beaten, crushed between the doorways, and tasered repeatedly. One hundred forty officers were assaulted that day. Fifteen required hospitalization. Seven people have lost their lives in connection with this attack.

Just this week, sadly—I read this story and I ached—two more police officers took their own lives, heaping tragedy upon tragedy. These past 6 months have been the hardest in the history of the Capitol Police Force. And yet they still keep watch. They still stand guard. They do their jobs every single day with professionalism, excellence, and grace.

Awarding the Congressional Gold Medal is a way to commemorate their sacrifice and make sure that the truth of January 6 is recognized and remembered forever.

To our Capitol and Metropolitan Police, thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you do. This recognition is the very least you deserve.

Once again, I want to give real praise to my colleague from Minnesota as I yield to her. She has done an amazing job as head of the Rules Committee in many different ways and this is one of many. And I want to thank Senator BLUNT who always works in a spirit of bipartisanship. We are in quite a bipartisan week here, and that is a good thing.

Senator KLOBUCHAR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank Senator SCHUMER for his leadership.

With that said, we in the Senate were able to come unanimously behind this important, important resolution, which I will describe in a minute.

I also thank Senator MCCONNELL, and I certainly thank my friend Senator BLUNT for his leadership.

We must pass this legislation honoring the Capitol Police and other heroes who protected the Capitol on January 6 by awarding them this Congressional Gold Medal.

Senator BLUNT joined me from the beginning in sponsoring the Senate version of this legislation and worked with me on the Rules Committee. And I thank the Presiding Officer, Senator PADILLA, for his great service on that committee to continue the work of getting to the bottom of the security, planning, and response failures that we saw on January 6.

While that work goes on, it is important that we recognize the bravery and patriotism of those who defended our democracy and our lives with Congress’s highest honor.

The insurrection at the Capitol was more than an assault on democracy. Oh, it was that in a big, big way, but it was also an actual life-or-death situation for the many brave law enforcement officers who show up here to do their work every day.

We will never forget the haunting shrieks of the police officer pinned in between the doors at the hands of rioters, pleading for help. We will never forget Officer Harry Dunn, who told his story again last week at the House select committee, recounting how he fought against the violent mob for hours and after it was all over, broke down in tears, telling fellow officers in the Rotunda that he had been called the N-word multiple times that day. And he looked at his friend, his fellow officer, and said: “Is this America?”

These medals today, these Congressional Gold Medals that will be displayed for millions to see—one at the Smithsonian, one in this Capitol, one at the Metropolitan Police, and one with the Capitol Police—they answer that question.

No, Officer Dunn, that was not America, but these medals that recognize your bravery, this is America.

Then our own Officer Eugene Goodman, who after saving Senator ROMNEY from walking directly into the mob of insurrectionists, ran by himself to take on a group of rioters and then diverted that mob away. We have all seen it on the video. We know what he was doing: allowing the rest of us to safely depart.

Tragically, the attack on the Capitol also cost the lives of four brave officers, including Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, who died the day following the attack. And I had the honor to meet his family.

Four other officers died following the events of January 6: DC Metropolitan Police Officer Jeffrey Smith, his colleagues Gunther Hashida and Kyle DeFreytag, whose passings were reported just yesterday, and, of course,

Capitol Police Officer Howard Liebengood.

We are also so inspired by the work of their loved ones who have come to Capitol Hill to fight for a 9/11-style Commission to look at the insurrection and why it happened, to get to the bottom of it and to advocate for the Capitol Police to support their officers.

It has been reported that at least 140 more officers sustained injuries from defending the Capitol. The courage of these officers will be remembered forever.

We responded. Senator BLUNT and I joined with Senator PORTMAN and Peters on the Homeland Security Committee to interview officials from multiple agencies and review thousands of documents. We convened major public hearings and then interviewed many, many other witnesses.

Our resulting bipartisan joint report focused on the security, planning, and response failures related to the violent and unprecedented insurrection at the Capitol, and it includes key findings and recommendations that must be put in place without delay. I am pleased that we have introduced our bipartisan bill, which will make sure that the new Police Chief will be able to call in help from the National Guard without calling a bunch of other people in the middle of a crisis.

We have just passed, on a bipartisan basis, thanks to Senators LEAHY and SHELBY, major security funding that will help to give the police the resources they need and fund the improvements needed to this Capitol.

We also have put in place two new Sergeants at Arms, one in the Senate and one in the House, as well as a new Police Chief, Chief Manger, whom I just met with for a lengthy period of time yesterday to go over all of our recommendations. By the end of the year, I will appear in this Chamber with a checklist to make sure that they are either done being implemented or in the process of being implemented to be done soon.

Another key priority that we called for in our report was advanced last week when the President signed into law, as I said, all of the funding that we need. And what that includes that I didn’t mention, \$4.4 million for mental health support for Capitol Police officers and the many officers who are still dealing, as we can see, with trauma to this day.

Passing this bill, which, of course, already passed the House—and, yes, I agree with Senator SCHUMER about how it is impossible to understand why some people voted against it, but it still passed with bipartisan support—is another step forward to honor the heroism and sacrifice of our law enforcement.

Those medals, when little kids walk by and see them at the Smithsonian, their parents are going to be able to tell them this happened. This attack happened, and there were brave police officers and staff and others in this

building that stood up that day and protected our democracy, and we will be forever thankful to them.

We are hearing a lot about gold medals, and some of them by our own USA team that we are so proud of the last week at the Olympics.

This is our Olympics. This is our gold medal. And it goes to them, to the Capitol Police officers and the Metropolitan Police officers and others that protected us that day.

Thanks, Senator BLUNT, who is here with us as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I am proud to join my friend and my colleague Senator KLOBUCHAR as we introduce and support this amendment.

You know, every day when I come to work at the Capitol, the first person I see is almost always a U.S. Capitol Police officer, and no matter how late I leave at night, the last person I see is almost always a U.S. Capitol Police officer.

I was working in this building on 9/11, and one of the last people to leave that morning as the Capitol Police encouraging us to get out of the building, but the last person I saw as I left the building who was still in the building was a Capitol Police officer.

The Capitol Police have a hard job to do. They not only defend us, but they defend democracy in a way that other police officers are not asked to do, and they always do it at the highest level of professionalism and dedication. That was never more evident than it was on January 6. It was a difficult and sad day for Americans but especially for law enforcement officers who serve and protect the Capitol and for their families.

I have often said that, very possibly, the hardest job to do in America today is to be the family member of someone who works in law enforcement. Maybe the second hardest job is to be the person working in law enforcement. But those families on that day were watching television, listening to the news, seeing their very worst fears play out for all the world to see on a day that was horrific for them, horrific for the person they love, and horrific for those who love this building and what it stands for.

I am incredibly grateful for the heroic actions we saw that day from the Capitol Police, from the Metropolitan Police, who, along with Chief Conte, who was the Acting Chief at the time, were here within 10 or 12 minutes of being called and here in force in that period of time.

Others came from around the region, and all those law enforcement people who were here to help that day, we are deeply appreciative of.

The legislation we have here really calls on us to recognize the selflessness, the dedication, the willingness to stand in the way of danger as others are able to try to get away from danger. It honors the sacrifices they make and their families make every day.

I hope, by passing this Congressional Gold Medal bill by unanimous consent, we send a clear message to law enforcement officers that we are united in our appreciation of all they do to keep us safe.

I urge my colleagues to join not only in supporting the unanimous passage of this bill but also to be quick in talking about our deep appreciation for those who serve in such a special way as we try to do our work here every day.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3325.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3325) to award four congressional gold medals to the United States Capitol Police and those who protected the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3325) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues, every single one of them, including Senator BLUNT and Senator COLLINS, who is here with us today, for supporting this legislation and honoring the heroism and patriotism of the courageous law enforcement officers who risk and in some cases sacrifice their lives to defend our democracy. I also want to thank Senator BLUNT for his work on the Senate version of this legislation, as well as Senator SCHUMER and Senator MCCONNELL, and I thank Senator BLUNT for joining me today.

Now it is headed to the President's desk. No more motions, and this is done. I look forward to seeing this bill signed into law.

I yield the floor.

#### INVESTING IN A NEW VISION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION IN AMERICA ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I would associate myself with the remarks of my colleagues who have just been here acknowledging the heroic work done by the Capitol Police on January 6. Clearly, they are very deserving of all the recognition that they have received.

What they went through on that very harrowing day I think is a reminder to all of us of the importance of the work they do day in and day out and just the challenge they face defending this Capitol and people who work in it. I, like my colleagues, am enormously grateful and just want to join in recognizing that with the award they just received.

I also point out that we are in the midst of a debate here on a bill that was negotiated in a bipartisan way. It is great to see Republicans and Democrats working together, talking together, coming up with solutions, whether we agree with them or not. But the fact that there are people sitting down across the table from each other and working through some of these big issues that we face here, one of which, obviously, in this country is maintaining a strong infrastructure, is encouraging, and in many ways, it is refreshing to see that happening here.

#### NOMINATION OF TRACY STONE-MANNING

Mr. President, it is sort of ironic, too, that in the light of that spirit of bipartisanship, that we continue to see nominees brought to the floor who don't reflect that spirit.

The Senate voted last week to bring Tracy Stone-Manning's nomination to the Senate floor. It is difficult to know exactly what President Biden was thinking when he decided to nominate Ms. Stone-Manning for Director of the Bureau of Land Management. Perhaps the administration's vetting wasn't thorough enough. Otherwise, it is pretty difficult to understand why the President would nominate an individual with ties to an ecoterrorist organization—an ecoterrorist organization—to head the Bureau of Land Management.

That is not all. She was actually involved in a tree-spiking plot during her time in graduate school, sending a threatening letter to the U.S. Forest Service at the request of one of the individuals involved in spiking trees in an Idaho forest.

Tree spiking, as many know, involves hammering spikes into the trunks of trees to cripple chain saws or the equipment at the sawmill where the trees are processed. It poses a significant threat to logging and mill equipment, but most seriously, it poses a threat to human life.

In a famous incident, a worker at a lumber mill in California was engaged in splitting logs when his saw hit a spiked log and the saw exploded. I will let a Washington Post story covering the incident speak for itself, and I quote from the Washington Post, as follows:

He was nearly three feet away when the log hit his saw and the saw exploded. One half of the blade stuck in the log. The other half hit Alexander in the head, tearing through his safety helmet and face shield. His face was slashed from eye to chin. His teeth were smashed and his jaw was cut in half.

Alexander had never even heard of a sabotage tactic called tree spiking until he became a victim of "eco-terrorism." Someone who objected to tree cutting had imbedded a